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SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA FRANCE UPDATE - 4/28/06

REF: Paris 2834

Paris Launches Information Campaign

11. On April 24, Minister of Health Bertrand announced France's new public awareness campaign to minimize the impact of a potential avian influenza pandemic. The campaign called, "Adoptons les gestes qui nous protegent," translated as, "Taking the steps that will protect us," will debut in May. The campaign will target both the general public and health practitioners. As part of this campaign, the GOF has adopted a color-coded system to notify the French public of threat levels and corresponding precautions to take.

12. Threat Level Green: The first alert level, represented by the color green, signifies a threat of common respiratory viruses, such as the flu and colds season. In this condition, people are reminded to follow three simple rules: to wash hands for at least 30 seconds before preparing food, on leaving the lavatory, and when returning home; to dispose of used tissues in the trash; and to wear a mask when sick with respiratory ailments.

13. Four million leaflets and posters will be distributed in hospitals, medical offices, and to different public sectors starting in May. In September, the GOF will begin distributing information kits and masks to schools. Beyond this, the GOF also plans to purchase space in the media to diffuse the message.

14. Threat Level Orange: This second alert level will signify the presence of avian influenza in domestic poultry. The public campaign will again use national and regional media to publicize messages concerning the handling of poultry.

15. Threat Level Red: This final alert level will signify that a pandemic of the avian influenza has reached France. Although the response to this level is still being developed, Minister Bertrand noted that 500 million surgical masks will be available by this summer, and distributed freely in the event of a pandemic.

16. Messages to Health Practitioners: The second part of the new awareness campaign is directed at health professionals to ensure they receive the same information. Some 400,000 'prevention kits' will be sent to hospitals and doctors. Each kit contains a CD-ROM detailing what would need to be done in the event of a pandemic, as well as two masks for demonstrational purposes: one type FFP2 (N95) for respiratory risks and one surgical.

17. Medical Field Skeptical: Soon after the Health Minister announced the new public information campaign, France's union of generalist doctors complained the plan of action was "utopic." Specifically, the union criticized the government's plan to offer informational training classes for doctors and health professionals from June to December of this year. To prepare the entire health sector for a pandemic would require a massive training effort. The union is concerned the government will lack the resources for such an ambitious undertaking.

More Dead Swans

18. Two dead swans, discovered this past weekend in the department of Ain in France's south, tested positive for H5N1. A seven km protection zone has been established in this area. Since January, France has tested 14,000 dead wild birds. Sixty-four of them tested positive for H5N1. While 63 were found in the same department of Ain, one was found in a neighboring department Bouches-du-Rhone.

French National Avian Influenza Exercise Completed

19. On April 24-25 Embassy participated in France's national level AI exercise. For a further read-out of this see Paris 2834.

STAPLETON